

SAME GAGNON

THE
**Mennonites in
Manitoba**

1875-1900.

A Review of their Coming, their Progress, and
their present Prosperity.

— BY —

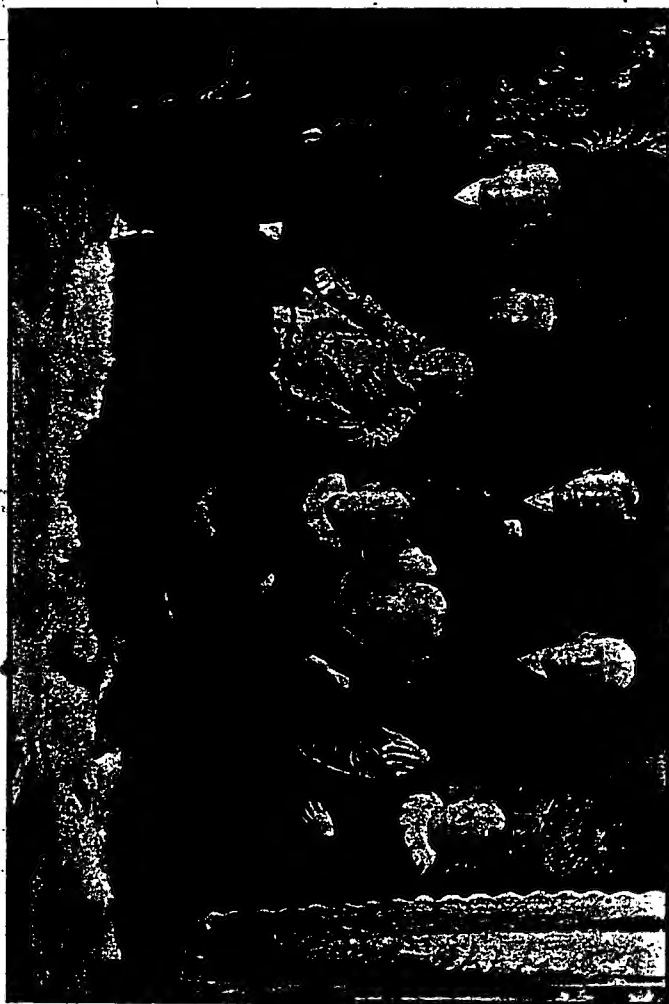
J. F. GALBRAITH,

An old Neighbor, and a Pioneer when all were Pioneers.

1900.

THE CHRONICLE PRESSES.
MORDEN, MAN.

FAMILY GROUP OF NEW MENNONITES.





NOTE.

It is not contemplated to present in the ensuing pages a history of the Mennonites during their residence in Manitoba. Owing to the peculiar institutions of these people, which were in full operation for several years after they came to this country, and which are still in partial operation, a real history of their settlement, hopes, aspirations and subsequent modification, must be written, if it ever is written, by one of their own community. It is, however, contemplated to submit in these pages, a sketch of these deserving people that will, to some extent, correct mistaken opinions too generally held among outsiders, and to present the Mennonites to the public as a body of desirable immigrants who have been of incalculable benefit in the settlement of interior Canada. Long residence on the border of the reserve, and some direct acquaintance with the people as printer for the municipality in the early years, encouraged me to attempt this sketch, but put to the test my fund of information for such a purpose proved very limited indeed. Happily, I was able to obtain assistance. I am greatly indebted to Mr. Jas. Hooper, Provincial Queen's Printer, for unfailing courtesy in supplying me with Legislative documents and records that I found myself much in need of, and I am also under obligations to Mr. F. F. Siemens, of Altona, Clerk of Rhineland, for freely permitting me to search the records of his office, and for much valuable aid in other directions. The illustrations are from photographs taken on 26th October, by Mr. T. C. Birnie, photo-

grapher, of Morden. It was not advisable to take the views earlier, as the villages are now in the midst of little forests, the trees of which were set out by the inhabitants in 1876 and following years. When these trees are in leaf, they almost completely hide the buildings, and even as late as the date above mentioned it was found impossible for that reason to obtain a recognizable photo. of Schanzenfeld, and for the same reason the plates taken of the big village of Rhineland proved valueless when developed, and could not be utilized, the long rows of buildings being entirely hidden by the leafless trees. The plates taken of Hochfeld and Blumenfeld were more successful, and though the views are only sectional, they were considered worthy of being transferred to these pages. In summer the Mennonite villages are gems of sylvan beauty, but their beauty cannot be recorded by the camera in a comprehensive way.

J. F. GALBRAITH.

Morden, Dec. 1, 1900.



The Mennonites in Manitoba.

A LITTLE INTRODUCTION.



ALTHOUGH MANITOBA, as a Province of Canada, was opened for settlement in the year 1870, under very liberal homestead regulations, it was three or four years later before the flow of immigration began to reach in that direction to any considerable extent. The writer of this review arrived in the country in the spring of 1873, and like all other immigrants of that early time, went immediately to Winnipeg, at the confluence of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. The present handsome city of 50,000 inhabitants was, then a little hamlet of scattered wooden buildings, but the location had been for a century and a half a centre of the northern fur trade, and for many years had been the chief trading point of the whole vast country. All trails led to Winnipeg, for which reason the little town was familiarly known to new settlers as the "Hub."

For two years I remained in Winnipeg, and then considered it time to look about for a suitable homestead location. There were at that time great tracts of magnificent prairie lands open to settlement within convenient distance of the embryo city, but these lands were not in favor with the arriving immigrants, who were at first mainly from the sister Province of Ontario, and being there accustomed to an abundance of timber for all purposes, did not believe it practicable to settle on the open prairie, miles away from wood for fuel, fencing and buildings. Hence, there was a constant

pushing out to where streams or the conformation of the land favored timber growth. I shared in the general fallacy, and in the spring of 1875 my prospecting carried me out to the then brand new settlement of Pembina Mountain (now the flourishing district of Morden), some eighty miles from Winnipeg, where I took a homestead of part bush land and located to follow the prospective industry of the new country, agriculture.

The settlement was very new, comprising eight houses, three of which were the homes of young unmarried men. Neighbors were far apart, and the life was lonesome enough, though relieved by plenty of work to do and the elation of new enterprise. The Pembina Mountain country proper was and is to a considerable extent a park district, beautiful groves of oak running parallel with the hill, and here and there reaching well out into the prairie along the banks of the several creeks. Every house was built in the timber, and no settler of that day would have thought of taking land not more or less wooded. Afterwards, experience taught that the advantage of the timber was more than counterbalanced by the low-lying land often accompanying it, and the waste of land by a growth of oak scrub very difficult to clear. It was not long till it became recognized that the best and most profitable farm is in the open prairie, where a plow may be started at one corner and turn a continuous furrow to the other, half-a-mile or a mile away.

But before this experience was gained, the imagined impracticability of an open prairie location somewhat troubled the few settlers, who conceived themselves to be isolated by the unknown wilderness of the West, and the great expanse of desolate, shrubless prairie reaching fifty miles away to the Red River in the east. It was not a pleasing contemplation, but remedy was close at hand, and all unexpectedly demonstration was about to be given that the rich, rolling lands of the desolate-looking prairie were quite as available for home-building as the favored bush lands of the pioneer settlers.

All in a day, as it might be, the Mennonites appeared on the scene, and a great belt of bald prairie, fifteen miles wide from the boundary line, and reaching away from the bounds of the little

settlement eastward nearly to the Red River, became teeming with human life and activity. This was in the summer of 1875.

In a descriptive sketch of the country, entitled, "Both Sides of Manitoba," published in 1880, this episode of the incoming of the Mennonites is referred to in this way :

"This vast plain to which I have referred, extending from the boundary line to the Boyne, and from Pembina Mountain to Red River, comprises some of the best land in the North-West, and is the largest section of contiguous good land in the Province. In '75 the few settlers at Pembina Mountain fondly hoped that in the course of fifteen or twenty years this plain would become settled notwithstanding the absence of timber. Before the summer was over, a long line of camp fires, extending for miles and miles, announced one evening to the lonely settlers that six thousand Mennonites had located on seventeen townships. It is '79 now, and farms on that plain are as hard to get, and are as valuable, as our much vaunted timber claims along the Mountain, and west a hundred miles to Turtle Mountain rolls the tide of immigration."

THE MENNONITES OF 1875.

MENNONITE is not a racial term, but the designation of a religious sect that originated in Switzerland about the middle of the fifteenth century. In the early part of the next century, the peculiar tenets of the sect were adopted by Menno Simons, a former Catholic priest, whose exhortations and writings, extending over a long period of years, greatly increased the number of the adherents of the new creed, especially in Holland and Germany, and in affection for his memory the new church took his name. Without going into details, it is enough to say that the Mennonite doctrine is much the same as that of the English Quakers. The Mennonites constitute a brotherhood of peace, who abjure war. The church discipline, however, is rigorous, and the bishops exercise the power of excommunication with

severe effect. In Germany the followers of Menno were harshly persecuted in a persecuting age, and thus it came about that, in 1783, a large body of the German brethren removed to Southern Russia, under the protection of the Empress Catherine.

In 1871, the Czar Alexander II, in pursuance of a settled military policy, notified his Mennonite subjects that they would no longer be absolved from military service, but at the same time gave them permission to dispose of their property and remove elsewhere if they chose. The decision of the Russian Emperor gave these peace-loving people the hard option of abandoning either their conscientious convictions or the pleasant homes that they and their fathers had occupied for nearly a hundred years. They decided upon the latter, and sent delegations to America to interview the Governments of Canada and the United States, and find if possible a suitable new location under the desired condition of exemption from service in war.

Both delegations were successful, and the German Mennonites of Russia at once commenced to prepare for emigration, part to locate in Kansas and part to make new homes on the fertile prairies of interior Canada. By arrangement, the Canadian Government set aside two reserves for these prospective settlers, who, after their custom, desire to locate in communities. The largest reserve was the 15-mile belt of open prairie facing the international boundary line above referred to, and comprised seventeen townships. The other was on the east side of the Red River, and was very much smaller. It is with the extensive western reserve, however, that this review purposes to deal, the other being too circumscribed to need special reference.

As has already been stated, the Mennonites took possession of their new lands during the latter part of the summer of 1875. The lands were undoubtedly of the choicest quality, though little valued by the people then in this country on account of the absence of timber. The Mennonites, possibly profiting by experience gained in Russia, manifested better judgment, and in successfully occupying the lands, greatly forwarded the settlement of similar lands by our own people, thus incidentally rendering a very substantial service to the whole country. Except one little

bluff of oak on Plum Coulee, afterwards the location of the village of Schanzenfeld, the reserve was absolutely treeless. To remedy this defect, for a modicum of timber is an essential of settlement, the Mennonites arranged for the temporary reserve of Township 1, in Range 6, six miles distant from the western boundary of the reserve proper. This township is broken by the valley of the Pembina River, and was at that time pretty fairly wooded with poplar, since to a large extent cut down and teamed twenty, thirty, and even forty miles out into the prairie. Two years ago, the purpose of the temporary reserve having been served, the township was thrown open for homesteading, and is now settled by a mixed population of Mennonites, Icelanders, Norwegians, and English-speaking people.

The Mennonites accommodated themselves to the scarcity of timber, their mode of settlement greatly aiding them in doing so. The first winter, indeed, they provided for themselves as best they could, some crowding into houses built of prairie sods, and others existing in some shape in excavations dug out of the sides of elevated ridges. But the summer of 1876 allowed for the providing of better housing and, with surprising rapidity, approaching the wonders of the Arabian Tale of Aladdin, quaint, home-like little villages were dotted over the reserve. The buildings were one-storied, roofed with thatch-grass, plastered outside and in with clay and with sanded floors, all tending to the least possible use of wood. The barns were of thatch and poles, and in many instances consisted only of a high-pitched, thatched roof resting on the ground. Though little wood was used, the houses were warmly built, and to economize fuel large brick or stone furnaces, plastered inside and out with clay, were built into the central partitions of the larger residences, thoroughly heating all parts of the building, so that it was commonly said by persons travelling through the reserve in winter, and who often put up over night at the villages, that "the Mennonite houses are like ovens." Fences were not needed as the cattle were herded by the juniors, though a little later fences of one heavy pole set on posts were constructed on each side of the single street of the villages, and similar fences served to divide the individual village holdings.

The Mennonites came to this country poor, having no doubt experienced severe losses in the forced sale of their properties in Russia. There were a few among them who were fairly well-to-do, but as a community they were poor. In the negotiations with the Canadian Government for the lands of the reserve, other negotiations were also entered into looking to financial aid to help the people to emigrate and procure necessities until they could provide for themselves. The Government of the day had the sound judgment to appreciate the settlers that were coming to the country, and did not hesitate in providing the needed fund by way of loan. All of that loan, together with the stipulated interest, has long since been repaid, for these thrifty and industrious people prospered from the start. And in the same way that they met their public obligation, they have always manifested a desire to meet their private obligations. It has become a saying that "a Mennonite is a safe debtor," because he is certain to pay his debt if he can command the money. In all other respects, the Mennonites, during their twenty-five years' residence in Manitoba, have shown themselves to be a people of sound morals, peaceable, law-abiding, and hospitable.

In accordance with their fixed policy, the Mennonites settled the reserve on the communal principle. They divided the land into village communes, regardless of the fact that it was held from the government as individual homesteads. In the village each head of a family possessed a building plot, and in like manner each possessed for cultivation a long, narrow strip of land butting up against the village. But the communal principle extended to the occupation of the land only, the product of the holding and all other possessions being individual property. The largest village was Rhineland, its two long rows of buildings presenting quite a town-like appearance; the handsomest village in early days was Schazensfeld, located on the south bank of the sluggish Plum Coulee, beside the only little grove of trees originally on the reserve, afterwards cut down and utilized for village purposes.

During the first several years of their residence in Manitoba, the Mennonites maintained themselves as a decidedly close community, that being a consequence of their church discipline. This deliberate isolation of the new settlers, together with their foreign tongue

1 FARM HOME OF GERHARD BRAUN, NEW MENNONITE, SIX MILES NORTH-EAST OF NORDEN.



and manners, their communal system, and their practice of building their barns abutting the rear end of their houses, so that one stepped through a door from the dwelling to the odorous stable, did not favorably impress the people of the adjoining settlement, now rapidly filling up. There was for a long time a disposition on the part of the latter to unjustly estimate the Mennonite, in his unpretentious Russian clothing and sheepskin overcoat with the wooly side in. But time is the great corrector of prejudices, and while the Mennonite himself has been modified by its influence, his English-speaking neighbor has learned to recognize in the people of the reserve, a body of settlers who have been of great service to this country, and whose substantial merits entitle them to high esteem.

The foregoing is probably all that there is any need of saying in regard to the Mennonites and their circumstances at the time of their settling in Manitoba, over twenty-five years ago.

THE OPERATION OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT.

THE Legislature of Manitoba at its session of 1879, passed a measure that, without having any special reference to the Mennonites, exercised a very important influence upon that people, affecting their church and communal system, lightly at first, but with steadily increasing force. This was the Municipal Act. The complete inability of the settlers in general, now widely scattered over the Province, to help themselves in the matter of sorely needed roads and bridges, had impressed itself upon the Provincial authorities. Up to this time, only absolutely necessary bridges had been built, sometimes by the Government and sometimes by the settlers concerned voluntarily uniting for the purpose. The roads, or rather trails, angled every way over the country to avoid the bad places, but there were innumerable small streams, sloughs and ravines in every direction that could not be avoided and had to be crossed without bridges. Some of these were desperate places at all seasons, others passable enough in summer and winter, but de-

pressing obstacles to traffic in spring and after heavy rains. The Mennonites were the first settlers to deal with this difficulty seriously. They bridged the streams, constructed dams, wide enough on top to serve as roadways, across the principal sloughs and ravines, and greatly improved the bad places along the main roads of the reserve.

About 1876, the new town of Emerson, close to the boundary line on the east side of the Red River, had become the supply point of the Mennonites and of the Pembina Mountain settlers also. The roads taken by the latter all ran through the reserve, and at first were bad enough in places, but the progressive spirit of the Mennonites soon largely remedied these defects, as stated above, and the fact was duly appreciated, as well as the further fact that in the long journey of forty or fifty miles, often with oxen, the hospitable houses of the people of the reserve were always available in case of accident or stress of weather.

However, to return to the Municipal Act. The need of authoritative organization of the settlements was recognized by every member of the Legislature, it being clear that only by the united action of those concerned could the necessary improvements be accomplished. The Government introduced and passed a Municipal measure, based upon that of Ontario, under which the whole settled portion of the Province was divided into municipalities, and the election of the respective municipal councils was made compulsory—that is to say, if the people of the municipality neglected to elect a council at the time stated in the Act, the Government took power to appoint a council for such municipality. The Act went into force in 1880.

For municipal purposes, the Mennonite reserve was divided into two sections. The eastern part was named Douglas, and included a number of English-speaking people on its eastern side who helped to organize the municipality. The western part was named Rhineland, and, on its western side, it also included a number of English-speaking settlers. It was a wise provision of the Government of the day, to so form the two Mennonite municipalities that each might have the aid of English-speaking settlers accustomed to municipal institutions. In 1890, the municipalities were re-arrang-

ed by Act of the Legislature, and Douglas was absorbed in Rhineland, the territory on the east and west containing English-speaking settlers, being at the same time withdrawn and included in other municipalities. Practically the municipality of Rhineland now constitutes the Mennonite reserve, though the actual reserve, as formerly set apart, overlaps the municipality both east and west. The full records of both the original municipalities ought now to be in possession of the Rhineland officials, but unfortunately a search of the municipal office at Altona a few weeks ago, made it manifest that most of the earlier records are lost, while those available bearing upon the period prior to the reconstruction of the municipalities are not complete enough to be of much service in a sketch of the municipal history. The substantial facts, however, are known to most of the early settlers.

Before proceeding, it is advisable that something further should be said of the Mennonite church doctrine and discipline. The Mennonite organization is purely religious, and their social customs are intimately associated with their religious views. It is of the essence of a doctrine with them, that civil government is irreligious, and being irreligious, that it is sinful for any of the faithful to take part in such government. Hence the scheme of isolated communities, in an attempt to shut themselves in from the irreligion of the State organization. To enforce the isolation, the bishops are empowered to impose the penalty of excommunication upon all members who venture in any way to assist in the civil government of the country. In the early years of the Manitoba settlement, this power of excommunication was a frightful weapon in the hands of the bishop—quite as terrible in its scope as was the more far-reaching excommunication of the popes in the dark ages. The action was the same, but the application was necessarily limited. It would be wrong, of course, to imagine that the Mennonites had sat in Russia for ninety years without responding to some extent to the growing liberal views around them, for during the last century Russia made prodigious progress. The people were no more persecuted in Russia than in Canada, though they were necessarily at a greater distance from the autocratic government of the Czar, than they found themselves to be from the democratic

government of the Canadian Dominion. Long before 1875, the broadening spirit of liberality had taken root in the Mennonite communities, and the primary organization was already broken into diverging sects when the order of the Emperor caused them to seek new homes in America. The great emigration, however, more or less harmonized them again, and the large body that located the Manitoba reserve maintained itself for a few years as rigorously isolated as ever was the case in Russia. Hence the first Mennonites of the reserve who, inspired by liberal sentiments, dared to oppose the discipline of the church, were at once placed in most pitiable position by the excommunicatory power of the bishop, which was exercised with severity. All social relations with the excommunicated were at once suspended, and life became a burden and a distress to the offender, who was debarred from his own people, and as a result of the system under which he lived was shut out from association with the surrounding English-speaking people. It was a crushing penalty, and those were brave hearts that had courage to invite and to withstand it.

To the orthodox Mennonite, municipal government is as essentially irreligious as state government. Hence, when the Manitoba Municipal Act was put in force in 1880, the church was no doubt much concerned, knowing the spirit of liberalism that was abroad among its members. Proceedings were watched with interest by the people neighboring the reserve, many of whom believed that the Mennonites would refuse to nominate municipal officers, and that the Government would be called upon to exercise the powers taken in the Act. But there were not lacking a few people in the close community, who aspired to sharing with their English-speaking neighbors in the responsibilities and honors of municipal office when offered to them on exactly equal terms. Natural ambition came to the top when the critical time arrived, and five councillors were put in nomination in Rhineland. If there was voting in any of the wards, there is now no record of it, and it is certain that in four of them the elections were by acclamation. No Mennonite offered for the reeveship, and the responsibility of being first reeve of Rhineland fell to one of the English-speaking settlers in the western range of the municipality, Mr. Jarvis Mott, of section

23, 3-5. The first councillors were: Jacob Nickle, of the village of Burwalde; Henry Reimer, of Schoendorf; Wilhelm Rempel, Rhineland; David Reddikopp, Schanzenfeld, and John Dyck, Osterwick. Mr. Rempel subsequently resigned to take the office of Sec.-treasurer of the municipality, which he held for several years. John Dyck, finding himself in antagonism with the church, refused to act, and the council, being empowered by law, appointed a representative for the ward in his stead. A civil prosecution was entered against Mr. Dyck for refusing to act as councillor, and he was fined \$40, which the church agreed to refund, but, it is said, failed to do so. Of the proceedings in Douglas on this occasion no records are available. The number of Mennonite votes, if any, that were cast at these first municipal elections cannot now be learned, nor is there any record of votes cast at immediately subsequent elections.

Under the management of Reeve Mott, Rhineland made excellent progress in municipal government. A complete assessment was made, and a moderate tax was levied and collected, which was equitably expended in all parts of the municipality upon needed roads and bridges. At the municipal election of 1881, Jacob Giesbrecht, of the village of Rhineland, was elected reeve, and from that time onward the Mennonites took the affairs of the municipality into their own hands, with a steadily increasing vote each year, in defiance of church doctrine and discipline.

The question of schools also came in to hasten the break-up of antiquated and outgrown usages. Indeed the school question was nearly as potent a disintegrator as the question of municipal government. The Mennonites are still very conservative in their school affairs, but differ strongly within limits and maintain their differences with some acrimony, a section being still opposed to the teaching of the English language, or indeed to any change in the system as practiced in Russia.

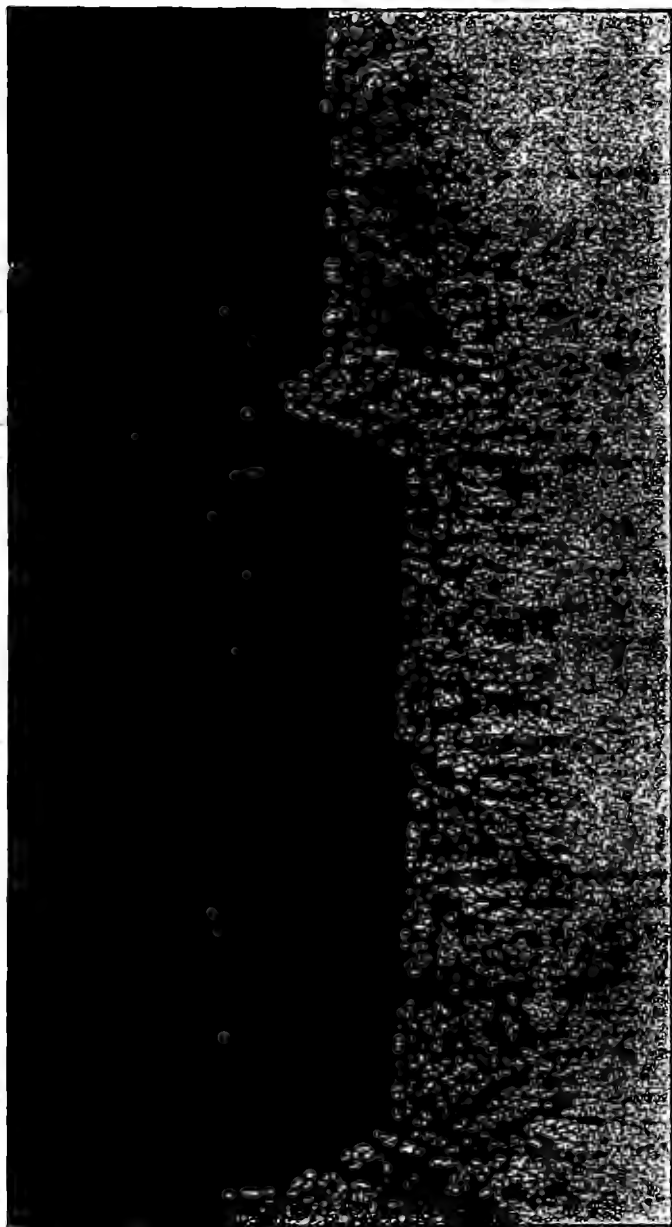
In this little review there is no call to deal at length with the steady advance of liberal ideas, even if the material was available, which it is not. The general results tell the tale. At the municipal election of the current year, 1900, the record shows that 427

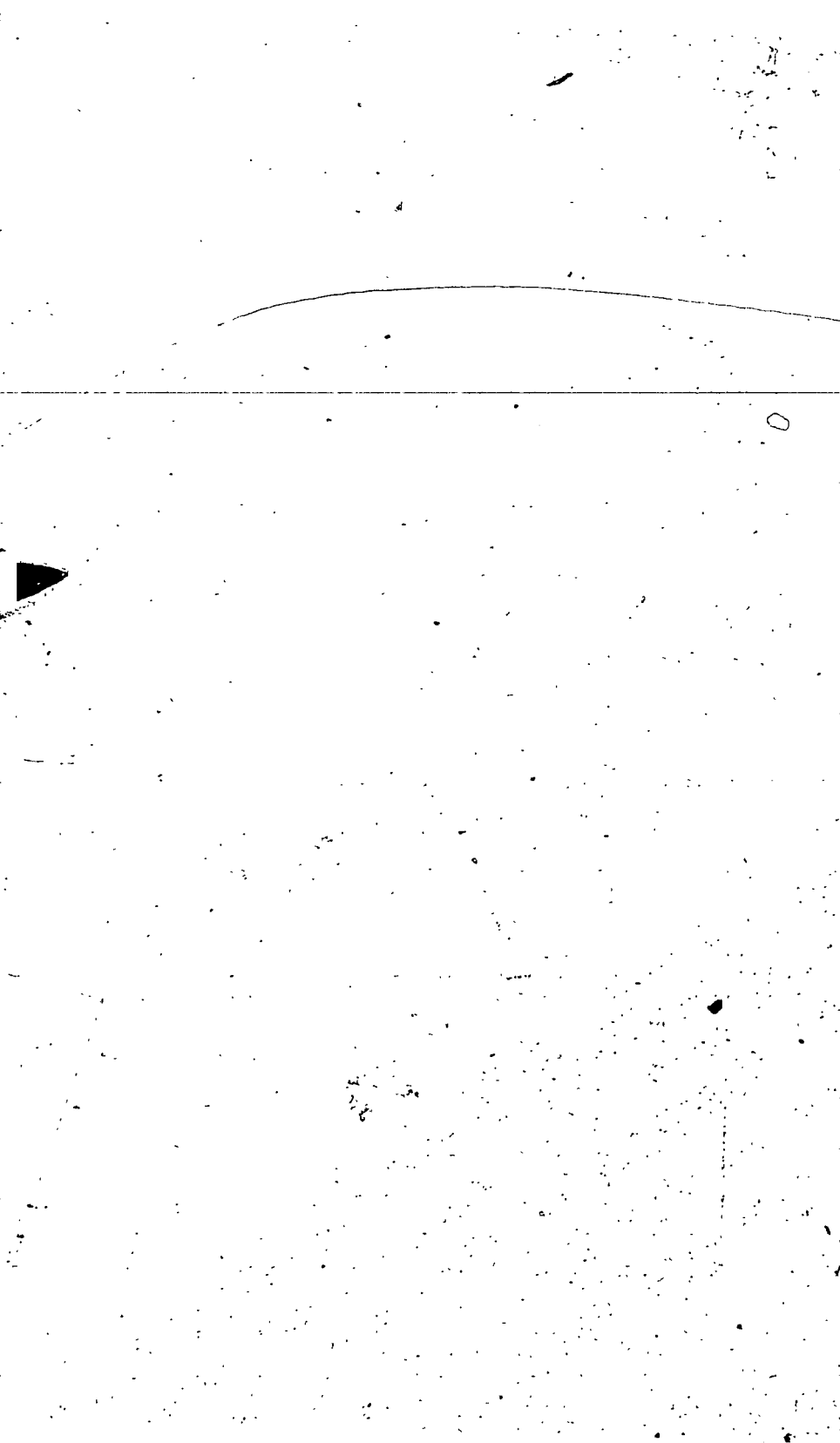
votes were cast, nearly all by Mennonites, and the present proportion of voters to non-voters in the reserve is placed at two-thirds. Necessarily, the steady increase of voters and civic office-holders, and the constant excommunication in connection therewith—a process which is still going on—soon led to the growth of a considerable body of Mennonites outside the pale of the church. The re-organization of this body of dissenters was only a question of time, and the time came in 1891, when the New Mennonite church was founded in contradistinction to the Old Mennonite church. In the main the doctrines are the same, except that the New church is broader in its view of civil government. Members are encouraged to vote and take part in the government of the country, and the whole tenor is in the direction of placing the church more in accordance with modern views, though the objection to military service is still adhered to. But the sentiment is weakening, and a general call to arms would not be without attraction even now to many of the younger men. Besides the New Mennonite church, the Lutherans, Baptists, Adventists, and other denominations have now adherents among the dissenters of the reserve. At the same time the public schools are growing in popularity, as will presently be shown.

The break-up of the villages here, commenced in 1890, but there had already been action of that kind in Russia. When the communal system was at its best in the Manitoba reserve, the number of villages was 62. The number of complete villages now is 18, and there are four partly broken up, so that 40 have completely disappeared except for the trees that frequently mark the sites. The first village to break up was Schoendorf, and it was speedily followed by others. As the Mennonites did not hold the land in common, but each held in conformity with the Dominion Homestead Act, it follows that the villages were necessarily built on individual property. Many of the villages were extensive, with commodious houses, barns, and out-buildings, representing large expenditure of labor and considerable outlay of money, and it is of commendable credit to the Mennonites that the legal owners of the village lands, and consequently of the buildings, permitted the peaceable removal of the latter without let or hindrance. These build-

7

SECTION OF MENNONITE VILLAGE OF HOCHFELD.





ings are now distributed over the reserve, on the individual farms of their owners, except in the many cases where new and substantial, and often handsome, modern buildings have been erected in their stead.

The New Mennonites recognize that they have greatly benefited by their withdrawal from the old organization, as indeed is quite apparent to any observer. They are New Mennonites in fact—new in their lines of thought, their customs, their energy, and their aspirations. The Old church cannot long maintain itself beside the New, and whatever respect we may have for an institution founded, adhered to, and administered upon conscientious convictions, all liberal minded people will none the less contemplate its final collapse without regret, looking upon it as a mere incident, now some centuries behind the age, of the Protestant revolution.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE succeeding ministries in control of the government of Manitoba have always been exceedingly liberal in granting aid to the educational institutions of the Province. The revenues of the government have never been equal to the legitimate demands upon it in the administration of an extensive but thinly settled territory, and it is safe to say that of those limited revenues the public schools have continually received more than a liberal proportion. Up to 1890 the school law provided for separate schools (Protestant and Roman Catholic) but since that date the law recognizes non-sectarian schools only. One condition, however, has constantly been imposed upon all schools receiving public aid, which is, that the English language must be taught, though the right of local school boards to provide for the teaching of any other language as well as English has never been objected to. The reader who has followed me so far will readily understand that State schools could not be accepted by the Old Mennonite church. But even among the liberalized dissenters there was, and continues to be, a pronounced conservatism in school matters. The teaching of English was objected to as an influence likely to un-Germanise the people, and

lead to their losing themselves in the general population. This feeling was so strong that up to 1891, only four public schools under the Manitoba law were in operation in the Rhineland reserve. At that date, however, the broader disposition that had been slowly growing, was beginning to make itself manifest, and was encouraged by the action of the government in providing a grant for a Normal school at Gretna for the training of teachers, and in appointing as Inspector of schools of the reserve, Mr. H. H. Ewert, who conducts an important private Mennonite school at Gretna, and who was also placed in charge of the Normal school at that point. While the objection to State aided schools has not yet ceased, the sentiment has greatly weakened, and of the New Mennonites those opposed to them are largely outnumbered by those who recognize and advocate their advantages, as may be judged from the fact that there are now in the reserve 34 schools regularly organized under the Manitoba school law. There was a difficulty at first in procuring teachers sufficiently proficient in both the German and English languages, but this difficulty has been largely overcome, and the public schools of the reserve are now being very satisfactorily conducted. Many of them are largely attended, and excellent work is being done. In evidence of the substantial progress that has been made I cannot do better than submit Inspector Ewert's first official report (1892) and his latest (1899). They are as follows:

REPORT OF 1892.

The undersigned begs permission to respectfully submit the Annual Report as Inspector of Schools.

The Inspectoral Division assigned to me comprises the District Schools within the Mennonite settlements of this Province. I took charge of my office September 1st, 1891. There having been no immediate predecessor in this office, I found no statistics, reports or any papers of information regarding the condition of schools in the Mennonite settlements, except what was furnished me by the Department of Education. To get a proper insight into the condition of education in my District, I made an extended trip through the Mennonite settlements, endeavoring to come into personal contact with teachers and officers of District Schools. I found that there had been eight District Schools in operation during the previous years—four in the settlements east and four in the settlements

west of the Red River—and that these schools had given good satisfaction to the people, and were considered by most of them an improvement on the private schools still maintained by the vast majority of Mennonites. All teachers expressed themselves very much pleased with the prospect of having Normal Sessions provided for them, some only regretting that they were not able at the present to spare time and money for attending the same, as they were obliged to supplement their income from their professional work by outside earnings in order to support their families.

The schools, owing to the protracted harvest labors, opened rather late in the season, so that there has been only a comparatively short time during which I could inspect schools in operation. I have visited all District Schools of my Inspectoral Division on this side of the Red River, and my Report on them I present in a tabulated form on an accompanying sheet.

There are several localities in my Inspectoral Division where no schools of any kind are maintained. The cause of this seems to be a disagreement of the people as to what kind of schools to establish, some favoring District schools, others private schools. In some localities, even where they would all prefer a private school, they disagree as to which church organization should have control of it. It affords me pleasure to observe though, that in some quarters the propriety of establishing District Schools is being actively discussed, and that in one instance at least, preliminary steps are being taken towards organizing a District School.

Besides inspecting schools I am commissioned by the Department of Education to make arrangements for the training of teachers. To carry out this provision, I assumed charge of the Gretna Normal School, an institution built and supported by an Association of Mennonites. I opened a five weeks' Normal Session on 21st of September, which was attended by twelve students, three of whom received permits from the Department of Education to teach in Mennonite Schools. After one week's vacation, another Session was opened for less advanced students. The enrollment at present has reached twenty-four with prospects of an increase after New Years. It is proposed that another Session of three months be opened about the fifteenth of April for the benefit of those now engaged in teaching.

H. H. EWERT.

REPORT OF 1899.

The following is respectfully presented as my report for 1899 :—

There are now thirty-four schools with forty one teachers in my district, two new schools having been organized and their school opened during the past year. In twenty-three districts the population is all German; in the rest there is a larger or smaller sprinkling of English residents. I am pleased to observe that in the districts of mixed population there seems to be no friction on account of national prejudices. The English appreciate the opportunity their children have for acquiring some knowledge of the German language and the Germans see the importance of letting their children learn English. One reason why the work in these districts goes on so harmoniously, no doubt, lies in the fact that it is made a special point to employ only thoroughly competent teachers in these schools.

The school boards, almost without exception, take great pride in the appearance and condition of school houses. They are usually painted inside and outside and not a few have even the floor painted, or oiled, in order to add to the neatness of the appearance and facilitate the cleaning of the room. A very fine school house has just been erected at Altona. It is a four-room building which combines all good features of modern school architecture.

The teaching force has again sustained some loss through the retirement of some of the best teachers from the profession. This is very deplorable, as it tends to neutralize the gain made otherwise in the advancement and elevation of the whole body of teachers, and delays the period when the services of the poorer qualified teachers could be altogether dispensed with. Six of the teachers hold regular certificates, the rest teach on interim certificates. The standing of about twelve of these is such that with a three to six months' special preparation they might pass the Non-Professional third-class teachers' examination. Seven teachers pursued Professional and eleven others Non-Professional studies at the last Normal Session held at Gretna.

There is a steady improvement noticeable in the methods of teaching used. The strong antipathy of a few years ago against new methods or certain branches, like geology or history, has well-nigh disappeared altogether. In about one-half of the schools English receives full attention and is used as the medium of instruction. In the others German predominates to a greater or

less extent, yet there is no school in which there is not some English taught. The achievements of the different schools are very various, some having classes in the seventh or eighth grade, others not having advanced beyond the fourth grade. This difference in the progress may be accounted for partly by the difference in the skill and devotion of the teachers in charge, but more largely also by the fact that some schools have existed longer than others and that the school population in one district is more progressive than in another.

Comparing the state of education among the Mennonites to-day with that of about eight years ago, when special steps were taken to induce them to adopt the public school system and improve their schools, it is gratifying to observe that great progress has been made. The number of schools that have come under Government control has more than trebled; the standard of teachers has been immensely raised; the schools are much farther advanced; very much of the prejudice against the English language has disappeared, and a large number of people entertain much more liberal views in regard to education. With these gains, which mean so much of an increase of the forces making for progress, it may be reasonably expected that the movement will continue to spread, and progress in the future be even more rapid and satisfactory.

H. H. EWERT.

PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY.

THE Mennonites may be said to have fairly obtained their feet, financially, about the year 1880. By that time every village had its fine herd of cattle, the ox was being rapidly displaced by the horse, and the area of cultivated land had been largely extended. There was a prosperous look about the reserve, and a person passing through it in any direction could not but be impressed with the tokens of progress. Though the village buildings were of the cheapest possible construction, they looked cozy and comfortable with their little gardens and shrubbery of newly planted native trees. Between villages was the open prairie, and here the growing herds of cattle were pastured, being looked after by small boys and girls. So numerous and considerable were these herds, that they invariably called to mind the days of the now extinct buffalo, when droves of those animals were scattered all over the western prairie.

An item of the farm not usually taken much account of, was made a source of considerable revenue by the Mennonites. That is poultry. The plan of building barns adjoining the houses, and the village-system, alike tended to make poultry a very profitable investment. The heat of the stable in one case tended to the production of eggs early in the season, while the village was protection against the raids of hawks, wolves and foxes. The Mennonite reserve continues to be the great egg producing district of the west, as it is also of poultry for market. The poultry product amounts now to a large sum annually, and in the early years of settlement it must have been of substantial service.

In 1883, the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. constructed the first hundred miles of the Pembina Branch of their system. This line of railway, running south from Winnipeg, taps the reserve at Rosenfeld, and from thence turns west and passes through the whole length of the reserve. A spur runs south from Rosenfeld through the eastern part of the reserve, and connects with the American Railway System at Gretna, close to the international boundary on the Canadian side. The Mennonites were thus amply provided with railway facilities. Within the reserve there are five flourishing little railway towns, namely: Winkler, Plum Coulee, Rosenfeld, Altona, and Gretna. These towns are all abundantly supplied with grain elevators for convenience in the marketing of grain, and with stores and all the usual business places for the sale of merchandise, implements, building material, and such other articles as the needs of the people may call for. Being within the reserve, they provide every settler with a convenient marketing place, and as the trade is almost entirely from the reserve, the dealers cater to that trade, and carry stocks accordingly. These towns are inhabited by mixed populations, and no doubt have had a modifying effect upon the Mennonite people, while they have undoubtedly been of great benefit, both in the way of convenience and as a progressive stimulant.

Formerly the furnishings of even the best Mennonite houses were of the simplest kind, and usually of home make. A couple of years ago, a business call I had occasion to make upon some Mennonites, revealed a radical change in this direction. A home visited at Schanzenfeld, a few miles south of Winkler, was as well

and tastily furnished as any of the better class of farm houses in the Province, and the Schanzenfeld house was by no means an exception. Intercourse with the town resident is doubtless responsible to the Mennonites for a mild indulgence in luxury in home furnishings, including the occasional introduction of expensive musical instruments. However the making of home pleasant by the reasonable luxuries of ordinary modern life is to be commended in those who can readily afford the expenditure.

In this booklet will be found illustrations of two Mennonite homes, characteristic of the new ideas and aspirations that have been modifying the people during the last fifteen or twenty years, and are bringing them into line with the English-speaking people around them. One of the illustrations shows the premises of Mr. Gerhard Braun, six miles north-east of Morden. He is a man of push and energy, and tells his story in few words. He says he came from Russia with his parents in 1875, was old enough to take a homestead in the reserve in 1879, commenced to work his own farm in 1880 with a capital of \$75.00 invested in a pair of two-year old steers, and from thence onward steadily added to his resources. He now owns ten quarter-sections of land—1,600 acres. Eight quarters are in the reserve and two are in the municipality of Stanley. He cultivates 640 acres, but is ambitious to get all his land under crop, and has eight quarter-sections fenced. Mr. Braun has lately been directing considerable attention to horse and cattle breeding. He has 24 horses, including a thoroughbred Clydesdale stallion, and 20 well bred cows with two thoroughbred bulls, one Shorthorn and the other Holstein. His stock-buildings are outfitted with all modern improvements, including wind-mills for pumping water and chopping grain. Mr. Braun says he considers himself worth \$30,000. He belongs to the New Mennonite church, which he says is more liberal than the Old, and encourages its members to take part in the government of the country, vote at elections and accept public office as a duty to the State. The village of Burwalde, where the Brauns first located, no longer exists, the people having scattered to their individual homes, though the locality still goes under the name of Burwalde.

The other illustration is of the farm residence and buildings of

Mr. Peter Peters, about a mile and-a-half north-east of the railway town of Winkler. Mr Peters came to Manitoba from Russia in 1877, and immediately settled in the village of Rosengart, proceeding at once with farming operations. Some years afterwards he removed to his present location. He was one of the better-off Mennonites, having a capital of \$3,000 to operate with. He is a modest man and places his present wealth at \$25,000, but he is undoubtedly worth double that amount. His buildings alone, modern in every way and supplied with every convenience, are worth \$15,000, and he owns 8 quarter-sections of land, all in the reserve, worth at a very moderate estimate \$20,000, while his stables contain 25 horses and 18 head of cattle, and his farm is stocked with several thousand dollars worth of farm machinery; Mr. Peters keeps a supply of cash in the bank, and believes in purchasing for cash. A couple of years ago he bought a magnificent steam threshing outfit, the best made in America, paying for it the spot cash price of \$3,300. He is a pleasant and cheerful man, and rides a bicycle for convenience. He also is of the New Mennonite faith.

Many illustrations of like kind might be given, but these are sufficient for the present purpose, as showing the disposition of the New Mennonites to adopt the methods and manners of their neighbors outside of the reserve, and progress with them along all lines of advancement. Probably a majority of the more elderly people of the reserve cannot yet speak any language but their native German. It is different, however, with the younger generation. The boys and young men took kindly to the English tongue, and obtained a moderate acquaintance with it with astonishing facility, considering their opportunities. Later the public schools of the country were introduced, wherein English is necessarily taught, and as a result all the young Mennonites speak that language fairly well, while many of them speak and write it excellently. Here it may be observed that the somewhat uncouth clothing that the emigrants brought with them from Russia, having in due course been outworn, the people long since began to appear clothed after the mode of the country. Being of the same family of nations as ourselves, it follows that a young Mennonite wearing good Canadian clothing and speaking good English readily, is, in person, no way distinctive from his fellow of British heritage. This is as it should be.

It may now be desirable to present some authoritative figures bearing upon the subject being treated of. Early municipal records not being available, the population, assessed value, stock, cultivated area, etc., of the reserve for 1880 and several subsequent years cannot now be learned, but there is no doubt that about 1885 the Mennonite community began to show up as one of the wealthiest in the Province, and continued to hold a leading position from that time forward. The increase in population and wealth has been substantial notwithstanding the annual migration since 1891 of a considerable number of the people to the new reserves of Rosthern and Hague, in the Territory of Assiniboia. The Act of the Legislature remodelling the municipalities of the province was passed in 1890, and came into effect in 1891. By this measure the municipality of Rhineland was made practically co-extensive with the Mennonite settlement, and from this time on the municipal records are complete, so that exact figures can be submitted for the ensuing years. The following statement is compiled from the several assessment rolls:

Year.	Population	Acres Under Cultv.	Horses	Cattle	Total Assessment
1891	6693	90,858	4265	6005	\$1,255,694
1892	7192	101,297	4191	6579	1,252,054
1893	6777	114,677	4729	5252	1,282,163
1894	6990	115,114	5617	5325	1,345,919
1895	7785	126,871	5976	6609	1,355,556
1896	7778	133,063	6149	6100	1,174,692
1897	7748	178,746	5612	6038	1,171,229
1898	7758	133,400	5934	5537	1,251,501
1899	7806	139,060	5561	5980	1,580,564
1900	7764	145,807	5596	6605	1,563,505

In considering the above figures, it must be remembered that the number of Mennonites who moved from the reserve to Assiniboia during the ten years quoted, was sufficient to thickly settle the equivalent of three townships of land, notwithstanding which, the population was more than one thousand greater in 1900 than in 1891, while the assessed value had in the same period increased by \$308,000. In 1891 the council levied a tax of 7 mills on the dollar, and in the way of progress in the construction of roads and

bridges, etc., the levy was gradually increased till in 1900 it reached 20 mills on the dollar, the greatly enlarged number of schools no doubt materially adding to the sum required. The 20 mills levy, however, is not as large as it appears, for the reason that the assessment value is unusually low, being figured on a basis of 25 per cent. of current value, which is much lower than the prevailing assessment rate of Manitoba municipalities. Nevertheless, the 1900 levy realized the large sum of \$31,270, and as Rhineland has never had any debenture debt or other fixed charges, it will be admitted that the people are very generous in providing money for municipal requirements.

It may be worth while to note that a 25 per cent. assessment value amounting to \$1,563,505, is equivalent to an actual value of \$6,254,020, and that sum therefore represents the assumed real value of the assessable property of the municipality.

At this date Rhineland contains 52 bridges, substantially built, and 235 miles of the public roads have been graded.

An endeavor to learn the probable value of Mennonite produce of the farm in any given year was not successful, no record having been kept. In the way of dairy products there is a current estimate of 100 pounds of butter marketed per family; besides a quantity of cheese for which no figures could be obtained. As already stated, the poultry item amounts to a large sum, as also does the item of flax seed, while the income from beef, pork and mutton must be considerable. In 1898 the Winnipeg Tribune published a statement of the wheat marketed at the various shipping points in the Province, and from this it appears that in that year 2,150,000 bushels of wheat were marketed at the Mennonite towns of Winkler, Plum Coulee, Rosenfeld, Altona and Grefna.

In estimating the progress made by these thrifty people, it should not be forgotten that they came to Manitoba under a debt of \$90,000, advanced to them by the Dominion Government to aid them in emigrating from Russia. This debt was paid off at the end of twelve years, by which time, with interest added, it represented the large sum of \$140,000. It is proper, however, to state that the Dominion Government of the day in view of the fact that

FARM HOME OF PETER PETERS, NEW NENNONITE, ONE AND-A-HALF MILES NORTH-WEST OF WINELER.



the loan was being carried entirely by the poorer part of the community, generously rebated \$24,000 of the interest.

The figures quoted above from the Rhineland assessment roll are absolute, but in order to realize the astonishing progress of the Mennonites in material prosperity, a comparative statement is necessary. Happily, this is available, the Provincial Municipal Commissioner having during the past three years submitted with his annual report a document showing the relative positions of the municipalities of the Province. The latest of these valuable papers is for the year 1899, and it is presented here to complete the record of Mennonite progress and prosperity. It is as follows:

Municipality	Population.	No. of Acres in Municipality	No. of Acres under cultivation	No. of Horses.	No. of Cattle.
Argyle	3200	246,468	100,000	8000	6000
Archie	180	138,240		2531	2988
Arthur	1925	552,960	120,350	358	816
Assiniboia	811	60,331	7,295	576	1431
Birtle	1200	178,000	18,829	927	3654
Blanchard	470	117,333	16,747	807	2152
Boulton	217	21,187	2,228	184	955
Cameron	637	184,320	66,949	2066	2581
Cianwilliam	872		9,819	720	2503
Cornwallis	1094	115,643	71,705	1506	1792
Cypress North	2031	276,080	162,000	2436	4452
Cypress South	2915	273,125	122,000	2500	1900
Daly	838	120,027	42,831	1176	1708
Desalaberry	1579	159,356	10,890	933	3906
Dauphin	2216	189,002	14,701	1201	2509
Dufferin	3809	144,000	88,750	3178	4893
Elton	1414	188,240	188,240	1694	3037
Ellice	405	84,615	5,061	317	1014
Franklin	2764	250,284	33,370	1751	3363
Glenwood	1319	135,993	58,917	1439	772
Gimli	1903	57,505	2,602	114	3819
Hamiota	1300	138,240	22,904	1320	2200
Hanover	2867	104,849	18,693	1467	5211
Harrison	286	138,240	8,869	643	609
Kildonan	826	17,424	2,346	435	788
La Broquerie	2309	96,359	4,282	1154	4018
Langford	1097	109,355	46,000	1164	2270
Lansdowne	1580	891,680	25,996	1467	4349
Lorne	2143	181,040	18,604	1280	2681

Municipality	Population	No. of Acres in Municipality	No. of Acres under cultivation	No. of Horses.	Nb. of Cattle.
Louise	3125	388,860	61,610	2346	6906
Macdonald	948	268,868	22,544	906	2352
Miniota	1148	119,680	31,648	1400	3106
Morris	1641	240,517	30,083	1800	1714
Morton	1600	150,153	51,186	2500	4000
Montcalm	2347	107,649	41,874	1589	2013
Norfolk North	2515	174,745	49,056	2168	3844
Norfolk South	4457	345,600	78,500	2743	4150
Oak Lands	1068	187,380	73,732	1840	2070
Odanah	1068	188,240	29,659	1081	2802
Pipestone	798	276,480	30,000	3957	7634
Pembina	2047	201,927	66,995	2748	5714
Portage la Prairie	3538	133,240	29,657	433	2769
Posen	919	56,912	288	615	1224
Rosedale	2387	332,560	35,882	1601	3633
Rockwood	2638	345,600	28,261	1963	9654
Rhineland	7806	255,229	139,060	5561	5980
Richot	1175	75,337	5,880	777	2685
Riverside	1017	112,577	75,680	796	1469
Rosburn	435	44,847	4,650	615	2610
Russell	922	99,342	9,068	644	1950
Rosser	434	101,854	8,257	504	1578
Sifton	1212	172,700	25,000	1212	2555
Saskatchewan	820	133,240	21,000	915	3500
Silver Creek	514	80,230	11,101	674	2802
Shoal Lake	1035	188,733	11,442	963	3919
Shell River	402	63,531	4,201	479	2285
Springfield	1834	285,200	17,610	1544	6967
Stanley	3610	252,750	120,450	3401	4610
Strathclair	641	106,245	10,000	860	3100
St. Andrews	1524	160,259	4,483	875	3248
St. Boniface	494	18,963	844	222	459
St. Clements	1285	155,122	7,825	497	1673
St. Francois Xavier	1764	1,314	6,786	1127	4553
St. Laurent	649	65,803	1,233	290	1030
St. Paul	458	30,703	2,478	299	806
Tache	1075	120,575	7,193	580	3070
Turtle Mountain	2397	193,779	72,245	2091	4320
Westbourne	1935	684,160	26,850	1612	4863
Winchester	3675	353,113	96,818	3111	3926
Whitehead	1343	130,760	82,940	1713	2024
Whitewater	810	138,240	30,000	1550	1250
Woodworth	1417	175,571	87,403	2886	3776
Woodlands	898	167,564	10,512	300	4148
Wallace	876	70,103	35,765	78	

It will be seen from the above that, although exceeded in territory by 14 other municipalities, Rhineland nevertheless takes first place for population, second for acreage under cultivation, first for number of horses, and fifth for number of cattle. It may be added that Rhineland also ranks first for number of pigs and seventh for number of sheep, though the figures do not appear in the above table. Rhineland, in fact, leads in material wealth the 74 municipalities of the Province.

From the foregoing a clear conception is presented to the mind, of the splendid prosperity reached by the Mennonites since that summer of 1875, when, strangers to the country and poor in worldly goods, they located the forlorn, treeless prairie of the reserve. The record is a glowing tribute to the fertility of the Manitoba soil, as well as to the thrift, industry and enterprise of the men who cultivated it. The Mennonite reserve is now a great garden-farm. You can stand on a rising ground in August and where, 25 years ago, nothing was in sight but waving grass, the view now comprises many happy farm homes and miles and miles of yellow waving grain without an apparent break, though in fact there are broad roadways at every mile.

A person traveling through the reserve on the railway, would fail to recognize it from the description given elsewhere in this booklet. He would say, "Where is the great treeless prairie? I fail to see it?" And he would be right, for the treeless prairie has ceased to exist. The Mennonites at the commencement realized the baldness of their new home, and they started at once to remedy the fault by setting out groves of native maple, poplar, and balm-of-gilead, and through the years these groves have been reaching up. What the traveller would see would be one of the loveliest grove-dotted prairies that can be imagined. He would see scattered farm houses with their beautifying and sheltering bluffs of trees, and of the several villages formerly in sight he would see but two, with their thatched roofs to remind him of the original settlement. Truly the reserve has progressed in other ways than in wealth. The landscape is a view of rural loveliness.

VARIOUS OBSERVATIONS.

WHEN the Mennonites first came to Manitoba, the unusual number of children accompanying them was a matter of common remark. They are, in fact, a very fecund people, the direct result, no doubt, of their outdoor employment and simple though abundant manner of living. They also marry young as a rule, and are encouraged to do so by their elders. When they first settled in the reserve they did not occupy the whole of it, some vacant lands remaining for the young men approaching manhood. It was not long, however, till all these lands were taken possession of, and in due course, there was a demand for land that the reserve could not supply. The unsupplied then began to seek for other lands to colonize. Delegates went to California, Oregon, and Washington Territory, since become a State of the American Union. Their reports were not encouraging, and it must be gratifying to all Canadians that after full inquiry, these shrewd agriculturists decided upon the Canadian territory of Assiniboia as the most desirable location for the overflow of the population of the original Mennonite settlement. They secured from the Government two reserves of one township each, which they named Rosthern and Hague respectively. The former is now fully occupied by a progressive, thrifty and industrious population, composed mostly of young men of energy thoroughly acquainted with the ways of the country, and a number of them Canadians by birth. The Hague reserve is not yet full. The migration, however, continues to Rosthern, the new settlers taking up land in the regular way as near that colony as they can find suitable locations. The first migration was in 1891, when about twenty families removed to Rosthern. Every year since then, a C.P.R. train carrying twenty-five or thirty families and their belongings pulls out from the towns of Winkler and Plum Coulee for the new field of enterprise. For the most part these western settlers leave Manitoba none too well supplied with worldly goods, but their industry and frugality soon remedies this. The earlier settlers in Assiniboia are now in prosperous condition, and all who have removed to the further west are well satisfied with their new lands and surroundings. In the natural course there will in due time be

an overflow of population from these new settlements, and then there will be another reaching out for vacant territory. Undoubtedly, the Mennonites are the best foreign colonizers that ever came to Canada. Drawing away from old ideas, they have to a large extent become Canadianized, and in the future, even more than in the past, they will figure in the progress of this country.

The Mennonites are not "rustlers" in the ordinary sense of that term. They take life moderately, and do not permit themselves to be unduly hurried. Nor are they at all averse to taking an occasional holiday, and enjoying it in their own way. In the eighties, before the railway towns were built in the reserve, their marketing places were Morden and Gretna. The Mennonite trade of Morden at one time amounted to a very large figure. All through the season of wheat marketing, scores of Mennonite teams, the loads of grain having been delivered at the elevators, would be lined up on the principal street of the town and remain there till towards evening, while their owners, often accompanied by their women folk, would entertain themselves shopping and gossiping. No doubt this simple entertainment is still in vogue at the new points of trade. The Mennonite's mode of progress is not swift, but it is sure. He holds whatever advance he makes, and the conspicuous prosperity of the community is not the consequence of unceasing expenditure of energy, but of persevering industry within the limits of reasonable labor. In substantial progress the reserve has never gone backward; the movement has always been forward, notwithstanding the disposition of the people to avoid rush and to progress leisurely. When the head of a family feels himself advancing in years and considers that he has done his share of active work, he passes the farm management over to his son or sons, and for the remainder of his life takes his ease, being assured that his modest needs will be well attended to. It is, no doubt, a pleasant prospect to look forward to, when a man passes his prime and feels the years growing upon him.

The orthodox Mennonite church is exceedingly rigorous in the matter of marriage. An adherent may not marry outside the church, nor may a marriage be effected between an adherent of the church

and a member of an excommunicated family. A little while ago, a young Mennonite in good standing wished to espouse a German lass whom he had met at Morden. The couple went to the Mennonite bishop to have the ceremony performed, but that dignitary peremptorily forbade the marriage. The young couple, however, were not to be deterred, and proceeded at once to Morden, where they were united by the German Baptist Minister. This little story is told as showing the weakening power of the Old church over its adherents. It must be admitted, however, that none of the Mennonites, dissenters or otherwise, have yet displayed any disposition to encourage intermarriage with the people outside of their own community. In the early days, when the people were poor, and when female help was in great demand in Winnipeg at high wages, the Mennonites resolutely retained their girls at home, and could not be induced to permit any of them to go out to service. This of course was in line with the religious principles of their church, and the forbidding of intermarriage, having been long persisted in and religiously taught, may be expected to be slow in yielding to broadening influences. The fact, however, that through the reserve there are occasional families bearing distinctly Slavonic names, is unmistakable evidence that the Mennonites were not able to absolutely restrain intermarriage in Russia, and the growing closer relations of the people with their neighbors of other races cannot fail in having alike effect in Manitoba.

When the Mennonites first commenced to exercise the privilege of the franchise in Provincial and Dominion elections, they manifested a disposition to vote one-sided. This was quite to be expected of a people in their peculiar position, and whose training had not permitted them to make themselves acquainted with the political issues of the country in which they lived. But the exercise of the franchise was itself the beginning of a political education, and in recurring elections the Mennonites have shown an increasing broadness in their political views. In recent contests they have manifested decided individual opinion, and displayed a measurable acquaintance with the problems of state that divide the people of the country at large. They are disposed to liberal views, notwithstanding the rigid conservatism of old Mennonite institutions; but

they appreciate political freedom, and except a natural preference for men of their own nationality, exhibit neither prejudice nor narrowness, a fact that has increased the appreciation in which they are held by the people of the country in general. The idea formerly held that the reserve was a sort of a political pocket borough can no longer be entertained.

A quaint institution of the Mennonites when they first came to Manitoba, was their flour mills. These were of ancient pattern, the buildings being of octagonal construction and pyramidal in design, and a good deal more capacious than they appeared to be at first sight. They had a height of about 30 feet. The grinding power was derived from the wind, and the great arms and huge sails of the motor looked decidedly pretentious from underneath. Several of these mills are still standing, and are a novel sight in this country. They are now used for crushing grain for feeding stock, while at Winkler, Plum Coulee and Gretna extensive flouring mills of modern design have been erected, and are operated on the roller principle, being equipped with all the latest machinery. The Mennonites brought with them from Russia their own millwrights, blacksmiths and carpenters, and these mechanics are perfectly competent in their respective lines. The people, indeed, appear to be naturally inclined to machinery and took quite kindly to the steam engine, threshing machines, etc.

At the start many of the implements used by the Mennonites were exceedingly crude. It was not long, however, before this drawback was remedied. They manifested immediate appreciation of reapers, mowers, binders, horse-rakes, seeders, and such like, and have always been heavy purchasers of latest improved farm machinery. Indeed, in this matter, many of them were a little too ready to purchase on the credit terms freely offered to them; and it came about that in this way many of the poorer members of the community put themselves in financial stress from which it took them years to recover. They also manifested the same weakness in the purchase of horses, and were often scandalously imposed upon by unprincipled dealers. The guileless people of the reserve were for a time an easy prey for sharpers, but they learned by sad experience, and with the surety of a day of reckoning



MENNOITE VILLAGE OF BLUMENFELD.

coming, inviting terms and long credit lost their attraction, and it ceased to be easy to "do" the Mennonites.

In the early days, and even yet, few of the Pembina Mountain settlers cared to take the trouble to beautify their homes with flowers. It was different with the Mennonites, who brought with them from their old European home a variety of flower seeds and a number of flowering plants. As soon as their villages were established they set these out, and in a year or two their homes were beautiful in summer with gardens of bright flowers. They were the first to introduce the dahlia, and the women added something to the family income by the sale to townspeople of Morden of ever-blooming roses in pots, which they cultivated in their houses. That the people have a natural love of flowers is manifested from the names given to many of the villages such as Rosenfeld (field of roses), Rosenthal (dale of roses), Blumenort (place of flowers), Blumen-gart (flower garden), etc. The Mennonites also introduced the mulberry tree, and it has adapted itself to the Manitoba climate, though it has not flourished.

The Mennonites were the first to introduce flax growing in this country. They brought the seed with them from Russia. It is now grown more or less over the Province, but the Mennonites continue to be the chief producers. It is grown for the seed only, and no use has yet been attempted of the fibre. While the main crop of the reserve, as elsewhere in this Province, is wheat, nearly every Mennonite farm has its field of five to twenty acres of flax. Last year there was a good demand for flax seed, and the price was high. By reason of this, a great many Mennonites were able to hold their entire wheat crop over for an anticipated rise in price in the spring, being able to meet all their requirements in the meantime from the sale of the product of their flax fields. The growing of flax fibre for manufacturing purposes does not yet appear to have been seriously considered.

The plum grows wild in many parts of Manitoba, and in favorable seasons is very plentiful on the borders of the wooded lands of Pembina Mountain. The fruit is usually indifferent, but many native varieties are fairly good. The Mennonites lost no time in

selecting the better trees and transplanting them in their village gardens, thus securing for themselves an abundant supply of very acceptable fruit. They did the same with the native high-bush cranberry and the black currant. The cranberry is a splendid fruit, agreeable to the taste, and an excellent tonic. By being permitted to freeze, it keeps in good condition all winter. As a rule, the English-speaking settlers entirely neglected these valuable native fruits, taking chances of obtaining supplies in their wild state.

Any one who has perused the preceding pages will not need to be told that the Mennonites, as a community, are now highly prosperous. A great many of them are rich, as that term may be interpreted in a farming community, and not a few of them may be accounted rich absolutely. They are gradually extending their original limits by the purchase of lands adjoining the reserve when opportunity offers, and it is a noticeable fact that, notwithstanding their ordinary economy, Mennonites will frequently pay a higher price for land than other people are willing to venture. This, no doubt, is because they have a better appreciation of the actual producing value of the land.

In 1896, the Provincial Government, having in view the dairying interests of the Province, established what is called the Dairy School. The annual session is held during three months, January to March, and is conducted by Mr. C. C. Macdonald, Dairy Superintendent. During the session of 1897, of twenty-six students who took professional courses, four were Mennonites, and of twelve students who passed successful examinations in cheese-making and milk-testing, three were Mennonites. This is mentioned as showing the disposition of the people of the reserve to keep abreast of the times. The attendance of the Mennonites was relatively larger than that of English-speaking farmers.

The municipality of Rhineland is one of the best conducted in the Province. The rate of taxation is moderate, and while a proper economy is practiced, no needed improvement is neglected, and the work is always done thoroughly. The bridges are noticeably of better and more substantial construction than in any of the neighboring municipalities. Rhineland at the present time has

52 bridges, and 235 miles of graded roadway. Bicycles are in common use, and buggies, carriages and fine driving horses are as numerous as in any other part of the country. The municipality has no permanent debt, and never issued any debentures.

For many years the Mennonites did not manifest any interest in the local agricultural societies and the annual exhibitions in connection therewith. During the last few years they are showing a growing interest in these exhibitions. Many of the women are proficient in fancy needle-work, which they exhibited successfully, winning a number of the prizes offered. The law empowers the Mennonites to form an agricultural society of their own, and in due time they will no doubt avail themselves of the privilege. The Government grants financial aid.

A FEW CLOSING WORDS.

IT seems to me that in the foregoing pages I have submitted about all that an outsider may fairly be expected to submit in regard to the Mennonite people during their residence in Manitoba. I might indeed have enlarged upon details, or I might perhaps have made the sketch more entertaining by introducing a vein of humor, for in the early years of the settlement especially, the humorous side was not lacking. But the purpose I had in hand was not so much entertainment for the reader, as a plain statement of plain facts according to my view. It may easily be that in referring to the peculiarities of the people, my insight may have been faulty, but I trust that I have guarded myself against any serious error. Many people, even in Manitoba, have a very wrong impression of the Mennonites, and have not yet learned that they are a progressive people who have been of inestimable service in the settlement of this country. I hope that the circulation of this little booklet will place these thrifty, intelligent, and industrious farmers where they justly belong in the economy of western Canada, and I hope also that the recital of the incoming, progress and prosperity of the Mennonites, joined with the equitable treatment extended to them

by the people and by the laws of this country, will be of some service in inducing other desirable people to come to us and join in redeeming from the wilderness the still immense tracts of fertile prairie in central Canada that are awaiting settlement.

I am of the opinion that the Mennonites cannot long endure in this country as a separate community. As already narrated, old customs and prejudices, social and religious, have already been discarded to a very large extent, and the disintegrating influences are in steady and increasing action. It is conceivable that in military Germany or autocratic Russia such a community as the Mennonites might have maintained itself closely for an indefinite period, strengthened by persecution or the fear of persecution. But in free Canada, where the law makes all men equal, and where public sentiment would not tolerate a shadow of persecution, the incitement to maintaining a close community is lost. The elders of the Mennonites will doubtless largely continue to hold the opinions in which they were trained, but the generation of younger men appear on the scene as reformers, and, as I see it, the rising generation will be less Mennonite than it will be Canadian.

I have thought it desirable to append a few letters written by Mennonites, referring to the country and its advantages as manifested in their own experiences. These letters contain the spontaneous sentiments of the writers, and are therefore a valuable testimony to the merits of the Canadian west as a field for settlement.

J. F. G.

MENNONITE OPINION OF THE COUNTRY.

THE FOLLOWING letters are replies to a general letter of inquiry mailed to a number of representative Mennonites in different parts of the reserve. They speak for themselves:—

ROSENFELD, MAN., NOV. 28, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I live on section 30, township 2, range 1 west. I came to Manitoba twenty-five years ago, from Russia. In Russia, after ten years, I saved by hard work \$1,000, which I had when I came here with my family of five. I did not take any assistance from the Government. Now I have four hundred acres of land, ten horses and fifteen head of cattle. Altogether, I think I am worth \$50,000. I don't want to go back to Russia, because I am in a country of free religion and free schools. All my neighbors are prosperous.

Yours truly,

JACOB SIEMENS.

ALTONA, MANITOBA, NOV. 27, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—Replying to your letter. I came to Manitoba twenty-six years ago, with my wife and one child. Now I have four children. Brought \$200, and took no Government aid. I have four hundred acres of land; three hundred and twenty-five acres cultivated, and grow twenty-five bushels of wheat on an acre. I value my land and stock at \$20,000. In Russia, I could not make that in a hundred years. Have seven horses, three oxen, four cows and seven young cattle. I like this country, for I am well off, and I like the climate, too; also, I like the liberty and the just laws upheld so well. There are a good many more men like me, and we have made all our money by our hands. We are all contented and happy and glad we came. There are a good many yet who would like to come, and whose time is nearly up to decide if they will go in the army or leave Russia.

BERNHARDT WIEBE.

ROSENFELD, MANITOBA, NOV. 28, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I reply to you by saying that I came to Manitoba when I was eight years of age, and began to work for myself nine years ago. I have now 480 acres of land, 10 horses and 6 head of cattle, and would not want to sell for \$25,000. I like the country, sure. A man can make money and it is free. My father made and

The Mennonites

saved \$1,000 by hard work in Russia in ten years. Here money is made much quicker, and it is free and no one is interfered with. I would not go anywhere else, and am well satisfied in every way with Manitoba. I am married and have five children. I may add that we lend our surplus money to each other, or buy land with it.

Yours truly,

EDWARD SIEMENS.

OSTERWICK, MAN., NOV. 30, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I came to this country from Russia with my parents in 1875. We located at and helped to build the village of Osterwick. I was only 17 years old. When I was 25 years old, I took a homestead of one-quarter section next to Osterwick. I had no money to go on with, so I went to Winnipeg and worked there at whatever I could get to do till I had saved \$200, and then I came back and commenced to work on my land. My people were not well off, and had to go in debt at first, but in three years it was all paid. I think this is the best country in the world for freedom in religion and other ways. I have now a half section of land, with 150 acres cultivated. I have 8 horses and 8 cattle, and everything needed on a farm. I am worth about \$8,000.

Yours truly,

ISAAC FEHR.

Nov. 28, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I came to Manitoba in 1876, when I was twenty years old. Brought nothing with me. Located at Osterwick, but now live on my own land, sec. 22, 2-5. I have 353 acres of land without any debt, and I value my belongings at \$10,000, including horses and cattle. I am married and have nine children. It is a good country for children, and for making money. I like the freedom in schools and religion. The climate suits me all right. It is nearly like Russia, but colder, and there is not so much sickness. We use our surplus money to help poorer men, and to buy land.

JOHANN HEPPNER.

KRONSFELD, NOV. 30, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I will tell you that I came to this country in 1879, and had very little money, barely enough to buy a team. I first lived in Kronsfield, and moved on my own land 12 years ago. I have family of 4. I like farming, and I like the country. We are free to choose our own religion. I have $4\frac{1}{4}$ quarter sections of land, that is 720 acres. Always have good crops. I have at present 9 horses and

18 cattle. Wouldn't think of leaving this country. I think I am worth not less than \$20,000. When I have surplus money, I buy land for homes for family.

Yours truly,

BERNHARD KROHN.

BURWALDE, Nov. 28, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I am the grandson of Peter Rempel the blind man. I came to Manitoba in 1878 with nothing, married in 1879, and have five children. I like the country and the freedom of the laws. I like the schools, also, and I am one of the trustees for Burwalde school. I have 480 acres of land, and I crop 250 acres. I consider myself worth \$25,000. Keep 8 cows and 12 horses. In this country it is horses that do the work, more than men. The climate is colder here than where we lived in Russia, but it is a good climate, and I have no fault to find with it. I would not leave Manitoba, and I do not think there is any better place for people to come to who are leaving Europe. These are brief answers to your questions, and I hope this letter will serve your purpose.

Yours truly,

PETER REMPEL.

WINKLER, MAN., Nov. 30, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I came to Manitoba in 1890 from South Russia. I was a practical miller there. Brought about \$1,200 with me. I worked as a miller in Manitoba for 4 years, and 2 years in Oregon, on the Pacific coast. Then I came back to this country and worked in Peters & Dyck's grist mill here for 4 years, and then I bought a half interest in the mill. I like this country and am well satisfied. I have a farm of 160 acres, but I do not work it, I rent it out. I have increased my capital five times more than it used to be. A man can do well in Manitoba if he keeps his eyes open, and tends to business. For farmers, carpenters and stone masons it is the best country I have found yet. Besides, I think freedom in religion is a great point, and this is a free country. The grain grown here is better than any place where I have been, and I have been all over half of the world. Land is now too dear in the reserve for stock-raising, but it is all right for mixed farming.

Yours truly,

J. A. BORM.

WINKLER, MAN., Nov. 28th, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I left Russia in 1875, and went to Newton, Kansas. with ten Russian cents. I lost all I made there, by failure of the

crops, and in 1885 I came to Manitoba with nothing. Now I have a beautiful home, with 160 acres of land, after giving my son 160 acres. I am comfortably off and am well pleased with the conditions here. The religious freedom here is satisfactory to me. This is a good country for a poor man to come to.

Yours truly,

ABRAM K. THIESON.

ROSENBAUGH, Nov. 29, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I came to Manitoba in 1876 with my family. Had three children. They are all married now and have families of their own, and are prospering. Amongst us we have 50 horses and 50 head of cattle, and we have 1920 acres of land. We own three farms in the North-west Territories, and consider ourselves worth in all about \$45,000. The freedom we have in schools and religion could not be better. Manitoba and the North-west are good places for people to come to, because they can prosper. I am 59 years old, and I like the country. It is a little colder than southern Russia, but it is dry and the cold is not felt much. It is a very healthy climate here.

ISAAC WIENS.

WINKLER, MAN., Nov. 26, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—I am well satisfied with this country, and I think any one will get along well who is willing to work. I came here in 1879, and had \$2,000. I farmed near Gretna 14 years and now I have accumulated \$12,000. I have land at Rosthern, Assiniboia, and I have a grist mill at Carman, Manitoba. I like the freedom of the schools here, and the assistance given to the schools by the Government of Manitoba in grants of money. I would be willing to advise any one looking for a new home, to come to this country. I was in Russia ten years ago on a visit, and I will go again in a few years more. When I was there before a great many people were enquiring about this country, and wanted to know all about it. All my old friends who saw me after 10 years said I looked healthy and as if this country had been good to me.

Yours truly,

W. PETERS.

SCHANZENFELD, Nov. 30, 1900.

DEAR SIR,—In 1875 I came to Manitoba with my family. All I had was \$75.00. I have no land now, as I sold it in 1897 to go into business in agricultural implements and farmers' supplies, and also a lumber yard. I consider myself now worth \$10,000. I find the farmers generally prosperous, and they pay their bills promptly. Manitoba is a good country for people to come to.

Yours truly,

JACOB B. DYCK.

